CALEB COTTONTAIL

HARRISON CADY

CALEB COTTONTAIL

HIS ADVENTURES IN SEARCH FOR THE COTTON PLANT

By Harrison Cady

THE announcement of the first of a series of Rabbit stories by Harrison Cady, profusely illustrated by him in colors, will be welcomed by the hundreds of thousands of children who have enjoyed his delightful pictures in books and magazines.

Little Caleb, in his travels through the Great Forest, meets many of the Forest Folk, and his adventures at the broad jump meet of the grasshoppers, at the circus, which numbers among its entertainers the tumble bug family as acrobats, the web family, the great aërialists, and that brilliant artiste, the lightning bug, will be read and re-read by children with the greatest delight.

But best of all are the many illustrations that bring out in most attractive manner Mr. Cady's humorous characterizations.

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THIS BOOK BELONGS TO

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CALEB COTTONTAIL

His Adventures in Search of the Cotton Plant

NARRATED AND ILLUSTRATED BY
HARRISON CADY

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1921

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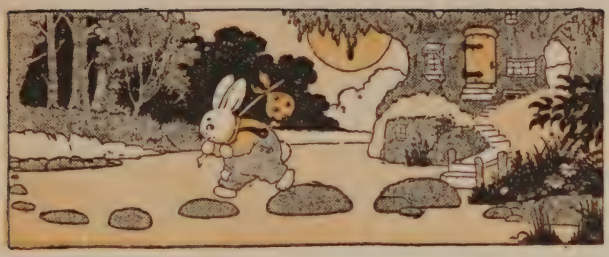
To Lorraine Cooper
the little girl whose quaint and
gentle ways has encouraged me to
try and be an amusing little rabbit

Caleb Cottontail

CHAPTER I

THE RUNAWAY



CALEB COTTONTAIL

CHAPTER I

THE RUNAWAY

THE hours of Slumber! And the Great Forest lay softly sleeping. All the world about was hushed and silent under the golden light of a summer moon. Overhead, in the great dome of the heavens, myriads of stars, the jewels of the night, were twinkling their last while the glowing disk of the moon sank lower and lower.

All the little creatures of the fields and forests were tucked away in mossy logs or hidden burrows, for it was the last of those mysterious hours that precede the coming of the dawn. The hour when fairies love to whisk about and play their merry pranks.

On this very night, while they danced around a great tree which stood in the center of the forest, they quickly whirled and scampered away; for suddenly, from out the stillness was heard a faint creak, creak, the tell-tale sound of an opening door.

At the foot of this old tree a door slowly opened and a bright little eye appeared which looked first one way and then the other. Then the tip of

a pink ear showed and a fuzzy little paw was thrust behind that ear, in the attitude of listening; and, as though satisfied by the deep silence, there

stepped out into the moonlight the wistful figure of a tiny rabbit, Little Caleb Cottontail.

All the other dwellers of the hollow

tree, from tree-toad to squirrel, were deep in slumber. Even the crickets, notoriously early risers, were taking their last nod before daylight. Each and every one was fast asleep. All but Little Caleb, who was very wide awake and about to start on a great adventure.

Arising while it was dark he had tiptoed softly about; first to the closet for his little brown overalls of which he was so proud, then to the small bank on the shelf which held all his savings, six pumpkin-seeds. Then he had taken down an old twisted staff which hung on a peg in the hall, and had stolen noiselessly to the pantry. He expected to be gone sometime and a few tender carrot-tips would not be burdensome.

Last of all he had peeped in to take a farewell look at his grandmother, and he had wished very much to kiss her good-bye, but he knew that would awaken her. So he had closed the door softly and, with a little lump in his throat, had stolen out.

At first all was very dark around him, but a ray of pale yellow light soon broke over the horizon to tell of the coming day. He hurriedly crossed the brook near the old tree, picking his way from one stepping-stone to another, and, when a mischievous branch sent his cap bobbing and floating downstream, he let it go rather than lose time by going after it. Time was precious to Little Caleb, and he wished to reach the less thickly populated parts of the forest before sun-up.

It was indeed high time, for already one solitary milk-wagon rumbled its way to the milkweed pods. The smoke of morning fires went curling upwards from the chimneys and appetizing

odors floated about from early breakfasts.

Then, too, he was commencing to meet strange creatures going to their day's labor. These he avoided for the most part, although he passed a party

of mole laborers on their way to work in some tunnel, and, as Little Caleb knew them to be unable to see him, he ventured a cheery "good-morning."

What a beautiful summer morning it was! And to Caleb, a little Cottontail, who had never risen so early before, it was all very strange, each step bringing some new delight. The damp, sweet smell of early dawn was like incense. The cool, fresh breeze filled Caleb with its invigorating breath, and you may be sure it was a light-hearted little Rabbit that hastened along on that summer morning, his crimson bandanna making a bright spot amid the green foliage, while his little feet pattered over the leafy carpet of the forest path. The sleepy

blossoms were commencing to open their petals for a breath of the dewy air and away off over the thicket there floated to him the echoing notes of a thrush, joyously heralding the day.

Everywhere the dewdrops hung upon the grasses in crystal clusters, and, when the great golden ball of the sun popped its head over the hills, they danced about and shivered and sparkled and glistened like many thousands of jewels, reflecting all colors of the rainbow. Caleb thought he had never seen anything so beautiful.

Every living thing seemed to nod as he passed, and he could feel the soft kiss of the morning breeze against his cheek and he felt the world to be a very wonderful place, indeed.

A friendly Heron, going the same

way as Caleb, offered him a ride upon his back, and as he flew along, high in the air, our traveler waved his bundle in great glee, and all the little white clouds seemed to smile and say to him: "We are cotton, too, Caleb."

CHAPTER II

THE GREEN TREE

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THE GREEN TREE

WHILE Caleb is flying through the air in quest of his great secret, I want to tell you of his home.

Did you ever think what fun it would be to live in a tree? When I say a tree, I don't mean one of those straight young things that shoots up as stiff and erect as a militiaman on parade, but a huge grandfather tree or a great-grandfather tree, that has seen a century or two slip by. One that is twisted and knotted, and filled with all sorts of nooks and hollows in

which to secrete one's self when one is playing hide-and-go-seek.

Think how funny it would be if the tree were so hollow that it could be finished into living apartments, with real rooms, and all modern improvements, from a kitchen range to real lights made by real lightning-bugs hired to sit on brackets fitted to the wall (one lightning-bug power each of them). And think how really funny it would be to have dew basins attached to your kitchen windows, and speaking-tubes made of the best wheat-straws, and dumb-waiters and air-shafts, and even cold-storage rooms for nuts and acorns.

It was just such a tree that Little Caleb Cottontail lived in and of which I am now going to tell you. One that

has a real basement floor with a real Janitor in attendance. Not one of

your ordinary men Janitors, but a Frog Janitor which, let me tell you, is much nicer. He is every inch as dignified even to his most dignified name, Mr. Green, or if one were re-

ally upon very friendly terms indeed and one's tips had been most generous, Tipman Green would be permitted. Then let me present also a real Janitress, his wife Betsy, one of the Terrapin family. Good, patient Betsy, who would listen to all your complaints, and then smilingly draw in her head and straightway forget them.

When I say that the Greens lived in a basement, you must not picture a plain, ordinary, every-day basement; the Greens' basement was not one of these, for—and here is the remarkable part of it—did they not have three dry as well as three wet rooms? A tiny brook near by had long ago learned to know the great tree, and had babbled and sung while

ANNETTE NIGHTINGALE
SINGING TAUGHT

it twisted itself about the gnarled roots until it had formed a deep pool of crystal water for the appreciative tenants.

Then, above the basement was the ground-floor front, with the Cottontail family, and the ground-floor back, with the Dormouse family, who slept six months at a time. The second-floor front, with young Mr. Chipmunk and wife, and the second-floor back, with Mr. and Mrs. Squirrel and all the little Squirrels; then the third-floor front, with sprightly Mr. Owl, who kept such late hours and fairly doted on dark rooms; and the third-floor back, with the Possums; and so on, until way, way up, almost as far as the eye could reach, was the upper story, with real swinging apartments.

Above them all, fastened to the highest branch, there was a gorgeous banner, bearing the words in crimson letters: "The Green Tree."

So, you see, that, although the house was more than a century old, it was still all very delightful and modern after all, and even though one were not particularly suited, there

was old Mr. Woodpecker, the carpenter, always on hand with plans and specifications to build anew for the most exacting tenants.

You may be sure the tenants of "The Green Tree" were all very proud of their home, for throughout the whole forest there was not another so roomy or so comfortable, even though there were some that boasted of having much smoother bark; but that was only a drawback, for, supposing one returned home late without one's latchkey and had to climb to one's room from the outside, there would be absolutely nothing to cling to unless one were fortunate enough to possess a pair of wings, like Annette Nightingale, the Prima Donna, who had a studio on the top

floor; Annette, of the sweet voice, whose classes for young birds were famous throughout the forest and whose pupils were all trained to trill ten octaves, each and every one. My! How I should like to tell you of some of the lovely, open-air concerts she gave on summer evenings, when all her pupils gathered from far and near and united in one grand chorus: much to the chagrin of her rival, Mlle. Katy-did, whose scholars could only scrape their wings together and sound their monotonous notes of "Katy-did, Katy-did."

CHAPTER III

GRANDMOTHER COTTONTAIL

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GRANDMOTHER COTTONTAIL

Of all the dwellers, however, the proudest of them was Grandmother Cottontail, of the first-floor front, and, indeed, she had some right to be, for the Cottontail family was not one to be spoken of lightly. It boasted a long line of ancestors of rare pedigree and, moreover, the Cottontails had dwelt

in the Tree for generations back, from Great-Great-Great-Great (goodness knows how many Greats!)-Grandfather Cottontail to Little Caleb Cottontail, the youngest of the line.

All had lived in the selfsame rooms, and it had become a matter of great pride for Grandmother Cottontail to take down the big family album from the parlor mantel and show the pictures of them all, always ending with the remark:

"And only think, they used to walk about in this very room."

And then she would show the dents in the floor before the great fireplace, made by the tilted chair of her father, the last Judge Cottontail, who had been the arbitrator of all the difficulties of every rabbit for miles

about. You see she really had reason to feel a little superior to the others who, at best, could only boast of a

residence of a generation or two back.

At the time that the first Cottontail had taken up his residence within the Tree, there had been barely enough

room for his family alone, but as time went on and the hollow grew gradually larger and larger through decay, there became room for other tenants. It finally grew to be the home of many creatures of the wood, but not one ever disputed the ownership of the Tree by the Cottontail family. Once a month the tenants would come knocking at the Cottontail door with their rent, animal, bird, or insect. Each and every one would be graciously received and their payments duly entered. A maid would serve sweet checkerberry cakes and honey dew. The parlor album would be shown and they would then shake hands and depart, each wishing that rent day came oftener, for Grandmother Cottontail was very lovable,

HARRISON·CADY

even though she was a little proud; and, moreover, what does rent amount to when it is only an acorn or so that can very easily be picked up in the forest?

At the time of which I write, grave trouble had entered the Cottontail household, and it all came about in this way.

Grandmother Cottontail had been invited to a tea, given by Mrs. Gray-Squirrel, a member of the most exclusive circles, who lived in another tree-house which stood at the very edge of the forest. A most detestable place in which to live, as she often said, and a dangerous one too, for the village boys used to pass it each day on their way to the school-house near by, and they thought nothing of shy-

ing a stone or two at you, even if you did belong to the most select set.

The day turned out to be a most unfortunate one for Grandmother Cottontail. She had hardly arrived

and was yet in the midst of exchanging the first compliments, when she was suddenly interrupted by a deafening clatter outside, and, rushing to a window, she beheld a tow-headed urchin, armed with a huge bundle of dry twigs which he was placing in the vestibule. Before she could think, there was a tiny flame eating its way through the front door and volumes of stifling black smoke were pouring in upon her, while through it all she could hear the fiendish cry of the boy:

"I 'll smoke 'em out! I 'll smoke 'em out!"

The other guests fled in terror to places of safety upon the upper branches, but, as poor Grandmother Cottontail was so very, very portly,

she succeeded only in squeezing into a dark corner, hoping that something would avert the catastrophe which seemed inevitable; for, think what it would mean for a Cottontail to die in a mere smudge!

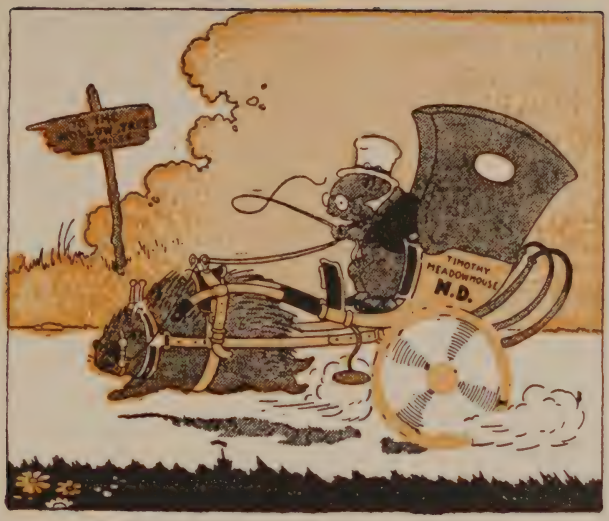
She must have fainted, for, after a long time, she opened her eyes only to receive a blinding shower of water, full in the face. It threatened to take away what breath she had left with its suddenness, but it also served to put out the terrible red flame that had slowly been creeping toward her, and that was surely consolation enough. After a time she ventured to peep from the charred hole and saw the kind old Schoolmaster leading a whimpering boy by the ear with one hand, while in the other he carried an empty water-bucket.

Granny's life had been saved, but at what a cost! All her finery was gone and her beautiful white, fluffy tail, which had been her pride and joy, was hopelessly ruined. Somehow she managed to get home under cover of the darkness, a most wretched and bedraggled object, almost ready to die of shame.

But now, before we go on, I must stop a moment and tell you more of the Cottontail family, for it is with Little Caleb Cottontail that we are most concerned.

CHAPTER IV

CALEB COTTONTAIL'S SECRET



CHAPTER IV

CALEB COTTONTAIL'S SECRET

LITTLE CALEB was a grandson, and, since a shot from a wicked hunter's gun had claimed his father, Caleb with his mother and brother had composed the other members of the Cottontail family, and a happy, playful life they led. Even though Grandmother Cottontail was very proud,

she still had a merry twinkle in her eye and saw to it that her grandsons never wanted for amusement.

But after the sad accident to Granny's tail, all was changed. Day after day she would sit by the window, behind half-lowered shades, and sorrowfully mourn to herself, or would stand before the long French mirror and sadly shake her head and murmur:

"Just imagine one of the aristocratic Cottontails looking as I do."

Then she would weep and weep as though her heart would break. All this was very sad, indeed, and you may be sure that Little Caleb took it very much to heart.

If there was a ring at the door,—for there were many inquiring callers who came to offer their sympathy,

she would hurry to her room and plead illness and leave it to the rest of the household to entertain the visitors.

And so things went gradually from bad to worse until even old Doctor Meadow Mouse, who had been called in on the case, grew disheartened. He remarked one day that he believed the only thing that would restore Granny's good spirits was to secure a cotton stalk and attach one of its tufts of fluffy, white cotton to what remained of her tail. He felt sure, he said, that if it were deftly done, it would be even better in effect than the one she had lost.

But how was a cotton stalk to be had? The Green Tree was not in the Southern country where cotton plants

are common — in fact, they were so rare that old Doctor Meadow Mouse could recall only a single one. It was in a distant village on the very edge of the forest, where a learned Professor of Botany had a solitary plant that he was coaxing along, but that was far away, so far, that it seemed hopeless even to think about it — hopeless to all but Little Caleb.

To him, anything that would cure his Grandmother was not hopeless, and, if none of the others were brave enough to go, why, he would go himself.

He thought of how surprised they would all be to see him come, bringing home the cotton stalk, and of how proudly he would march up the path to the door, and of how all the

CHIRPING LESSON No. 1
PROF CRICKET
SELECT CLASSES IN
CHIRPING

other tenants of The Green Tree would look upon him with admiration. He could even see the light of happiness come into his Grandmother's eyes when that tuft of snowy cotton was added to her tail. Surely it would be an adventure worthy of a Cottontail.

So, after much thought, he resolved to steal away the very next morning. At first, Caleb had an idea that he would take his brother into the secret, but only the day before he had, unfortunately, fallen into a burdock bush, which had so filled his coat with its prickly burrs that, until he could get them picked out, he was in almost as sorry a plight as Grandmother herself. Little Caleb decided to go alone, and so we find him flying high in the

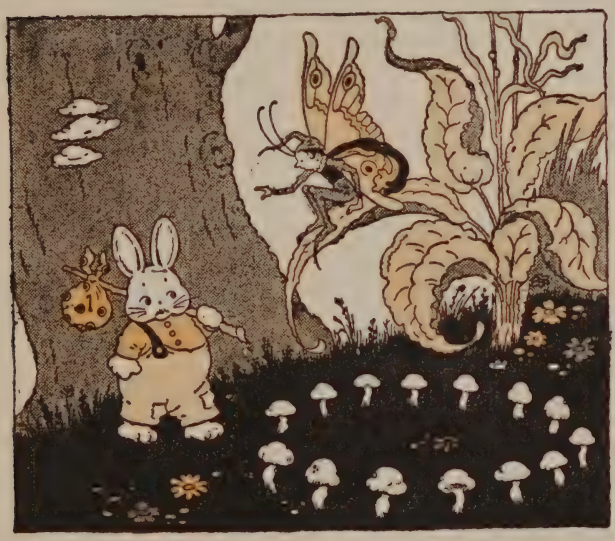
air, clinging to the Heron's back. He was very glad of a ride, for each sweep of old Mr. Heron's wings carried him

nearer his goal. Also the Heron was able to give him directions to the village and the location of the botanist's home. At a crossroad, they parted, the Heron going to the East, where a big pond was situated, while Caleb took a path to the West.

The Great Forest lay thick about him, tall and silent, but every now and then he would come to a clearing, and, in one of these, he was greatly amused to spy a pompous-looking insect, arrayed in cap and gown, ringing a blue bell furiously, while near by, was a tiny sign conveying the news that "Professor Cricket" would "conduct a private class in chirping."

Caleb judged that this must be Professor Cricket himself, and he thought that one so wise would surely be able to tell him a great deal about his journey. He was therefore surprised when told curtly by the Professor that he "was not furnishing guide-maps, but that if he wished to take a few lessons in chirping, he

would be glad to talk to him." Caleb thought him a bit too business-like, and then, too, whoever heard of a Rabbit chirping!



Somewhat crestfallen, our little Rabbit hurried away, but suddenly his thoughts gave way to joy, for on passing a moss-covered ledge, he

spied on the ground before him a tiny circle of crimson mushrooms.

"Hurrah!" shouted Caleb as he jumped right into the air, while his heart gave a great bound. "That's the Fairy Ring Granny has told us about, and now I shall have good luck."

"That you will," piped a cheery voice from above his head.

Upon looking up, Caleb saw a little laughing Fairy sitting on a leaf.

"Good-day to you, Caleb Cottontail," he called. "Wisp-Wisp, the Fairy of Good Luck, wishes you good fortune."

And before Caleb could reply, the Fairy flew away with a shimmer of his gossamer wings over the lacy fern tops.

CHAPTER V

ADVENTURES IN THE FOREST

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ADVENTURES IN THE FOREST

A LITTLE farther on, Caleb came to a great Ant City which was fairly alive with activity, but, when he asked one of the busy workers for information the Ant made him no reply, but passed a card bearing the inscription:

"We never talk during business hours."

Greatly taken aback by these re-

bukes, Caleb decided to hunt about amongst the tall grasses which grew beside the roadway, in the hope of meeting some stray creature who would not be too busy to talk, and, sure enough, upon going but a short distance, he found a funny old Bumble-Bee perched upon a nodding daisy-blossom, crooning away to himself:

"Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief; doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief."

Caleb called to him many times before he looked down, but presently, peering from under his old beaver hat, he wheezed in a queer, cracked voice, "I am powerful hard o' hearing," and motioned Caleb to stand beneath him while he unslung a trumpet flower

from his side, adjusted it to his ear, and said:

"What do ye want? What do ye want?"

"I wish to go to the village," shouted Caleb, at the top of his voice.

"All right, go ahead," snapped old Mr. Bumble-Bee, "but don't ask me again."

He then proceeded to shake the stalk so violently that its petals fairly showered upon Little Caleb, while, all the time waving a faded green umbrella frantically, he chanted in his high-pitched voice:

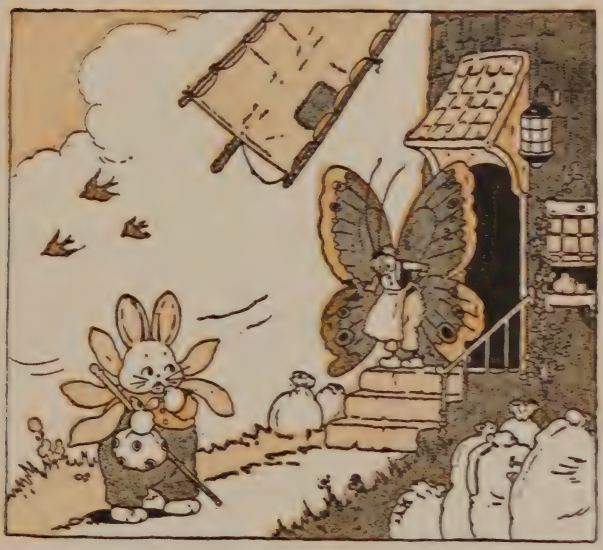
"Beggar man, thief, beggar man, thief, scat! scat!"

You may be sure that Caleb did scamper away as fast as his short legs could carry him.

Caleb, a trifle discouraged by so many rebuffs, traveled on until he came to a windmill upon a grassy hill-top. The frolicsome summer winds made the huge wings revolve busily, while before the door of the mill stood a genial-faced Moth, covered from head to foot with powder, trilling a quaint little song:

"When the wind blows,
Then the mill goes.
When the wind stops,
Then the wing drops."

Caleb walked up to him and said:



"Please, Sir, I am Little Caleb Cottontail, from The Green Tree in the forest, and I wish to be directed to the village."

Hearing these words the Miller broke into a merry laugh, saying:

"You 're not a Cottontail; you look more like a flower-show exhibit!"

And then Caleb saw for the first time that in his haste to get away from the crooning Bumble-Bee, many of the daisy petals had clung to his coat so that he did look very much like a daisy blossom. However, his little joke put the Miller into a most pleasant mood, and he insisted that Caleb should take breakfast with him before he continued his journey, and he called to his wife and daughter in the little house beyond to "come and see a four-legged daisy."

Caleb, of course, blushed furiously when the Miller's daughter gracefully dropped him a curtsy, but matters

were better when she helped him to remove the petals and showed him the interior of the mill, with its great stone grinders, and told him of grand dames of fashion who always insisted on having their maids powder their wings with only her father's powder.

The tinkle of the breakfast bell brought them both to the dining-room, and when the Miller's daughter waited upon him with her own hands, Caleb thought he had never tasted carrot-tops so sweet before. Perhaps our hero's heart was a little heavy when it came time for him to go, but he felt a little consoled when the Miller's daughter took a flower from the chaplet which she wore around her golden head and tucked it under the little shoulder-strap of his pantaloons, and

waved her wings to him until the foliage hid him from view.

Caleb trudged away briskly and traveled on and on. Finally, he saw, from the crest of a little knoll, flags and banners floating about in the breezes. He decided that there was time enough for him to see what it was all about, so he went scampering toward the green, upon which were pitched many gayly colored tents, all gorgeously decorated, and moving about, hither and thither amongst them, were Grasshoppers in countless numbers.

There were tall Grasshoppers and and short Grasshoppers, fat Grasshoppers and thin Grasshoppers; green Grasshoppers and brown Grasshoppers; gray Grasshoppers, and Grass-

hoppers of so many kinds and shades that goodness knows where they all came from. But all were there, and many were dressed in gay sweaters with college symbols embroidered upon them, by which Caleb judged them to be athletes, which proved to be the case, it being the annual field day of the Grasshoppers' Athletic Association. Caleb was just in time, too, for the greatest event of the day, the standing broad jump, the greatest feat of all Grasshoppers, and I wish you could have seen the look of surprise that came into Caleb's eyes, for they fairly bulged in amazement. He had never dreamt of such jumping.

Even Tipman Green, the Janitor, who held The Green Tree record, would have been hopelessly outdone.

CHAPTER VI

THE CIRCUS

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THE CIRCUS

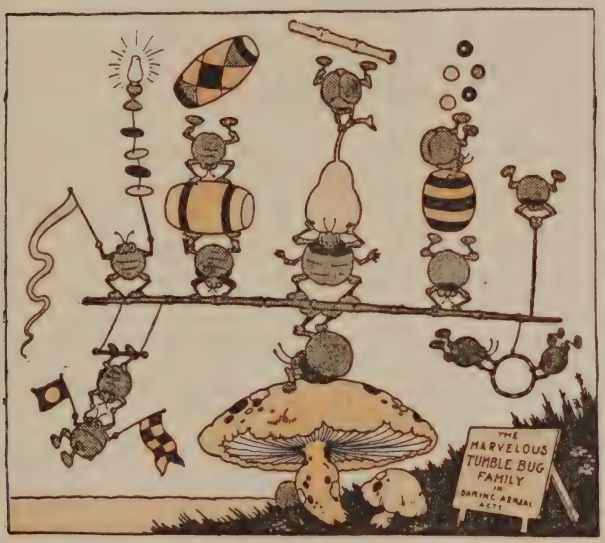
When the first prize was awarded to a stalwart jumper from Caleb's own township for having made a marvelous jump of fifty times his own length, according to a scholarly old Inchworm, who acted as official measurer, Caleb's delight knew no bounds. He gleefully joined the others in carrying the winner about on their shoulders amid deafening shouts, and the blare of horns and the crack of Snapdragons. Caleb was even introduced to

the champion whose name was Jerry, but was now officially christened "Jerry, the Jumper."

Upon learning that Little Caleb and he came from the same township, he grew very friendly, and, when he heard Caleb's mission, offered to accompany him a short distance, for Jerry had contracted with a wandering circus and was about to start on his way which led in the same direction as Caleb's.

I will not stop to tell you of their travels together, or of how Jerry would throw Caleb into roars of laughter by jumping over all the other pedestrians they chanced to meet; how once he even jumped over an entire regiment of consequential Beetles, on their way to Review, or how

he leaped over a great Ant City without so much as touching it. Finally,



they came to the circus, camped in a shady grove beside the roadway where there was a carpeting of soft, green moss. At one side a tiny brook murmured its way over white pebbles, while in the background, at the base

of a great tree-trunk, rose a network of lacy ferns.

The advent of the "Jumper" and Caleb was hailed with great delight by the members of the troupe, who ran out to meet them. Their wagons and chariots were drawn up in a circle, in the center of which, upon a natural stage made by a sawed-off tree-trunk, many wonderful feats were even then being performed. A tiny Ant, dressed in brilliant crimson trunks, gayly spangled, was holding at arms' length a huge black weight, which proved upon close inspection to be nothing more or less than a blackberry, even if it did bear the very important sign of "2000 lbs."

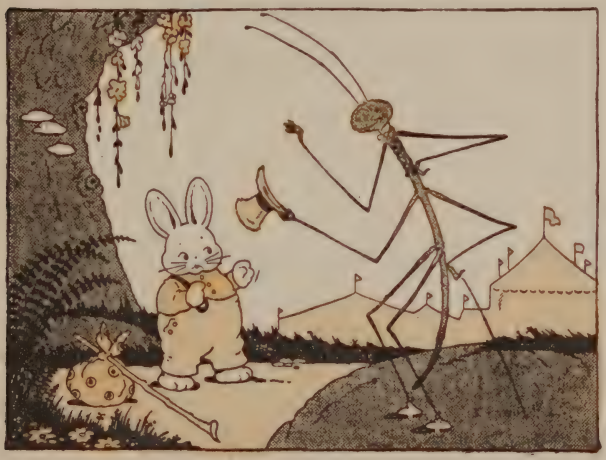
"That is the Great Señor Ant, the strongest bug alive," admiringly whis-

PHOTOS
MADAM
DIAMOND
BEETLE
THE
MOST GEORGEOUS
INSECT ALIVE

pered Jerry, "and over beyond, you see the famous Tumble Bug Family, perfecting one of their marvelous new acts."

Upon a dizzy trapeze, a whole family was hanging head downward. They, Caleb learned, were the Web Family, the Great Aerialists. I will not attempt to tell you of the many wonderful things Caleb saw on that stage, but they were as nothing compared to what the side show, camped a short distance away, had to offer. There Little Caleb saw Jojo, the Dog-Faced Caterpillar, arguing with a dejected-looking tailor, as to where the waist-line of the new costume should be drawn, and Little Caleb's eyes nearly popped right out of his head with wonder when he saw, seated

upon a raised dais, the dazzling figure of Madam Diamond Beetle. Beside her sat Monsieur June-Bug, her husband, who wore, tilted rakishly over his forehead, an enormous green eye-shade, from beneath which projected



the biggest pair of smoked glasses that Caleb had ever seen. Caleb ventured to remark that it must be very delightful to have such a dazzling

wife to look upon, and Monsieur June-Bug proudly nodded his head in the affirmative, but somewhat qualified this by adding that, even though his wife was the most brilliant creature alive, there were times when she actually hurt his eyes.

Once Caleb, leaning against a sapling as he supposed, was surprised to feel it slowly moving away, and to hear a voice say, in a slightly sarcastic tone: "Excuse me, Sir, but if you are sufficiently rested, I will continue my duties." Upon looking up, Caleb was exceedingly mortified to find that he had been deliberately leaning against Mr. Walking-Stick, the thin exhibit.

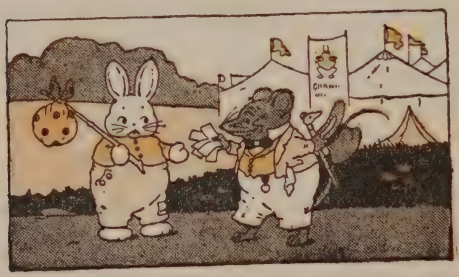
Then there was the wonderful "Fat Frog," and the horrible "Cannibal

Spider" who ate a live fly at each performance, while in the bottom of a tank, filled with crystal water, sat a queer, old insect, complacently reading a copy of "The Beetleville News"; a little beyond, his wife and daughters were sitting in a brook, busily engaged in preparing a meal of crispy cow-slips. This was the renowned Water Bug Family, high divers and aquatic marvels.

Caleb, by the time he had seen everything, had become so fascinated that he so far forgot himself as to buy a photograph of the "Fat Frog," as a present for Tipman Green, the Janitor of The Green Tree. His one grief, however, was that lack of time prevented him from staying to see the Great Tent Performance of the after-

noon, but it was not to be thought of.

All the members of the troupe shook hands in farewell, while the Manager, a burly Mouse, shrewdly combining business with his social duties, thrust a bundle of circulars, advertising the wonderful show, into Caleb's hand for him to distribute along the way.



CHAPTER VII

MR. PORCUPINE AND DADDY LONGLEGS

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MR. PORCUPINE AND DADDY LONGLEGS

CALEB, trudging rapidly along and wishing to rid himself of the bulky bundle of handbills, stopped at every nook and cranny that might be the house of a fellow creature and poked an enticing handbill into each small doorway.

"Whew!" he would exclaim, "I guess that will get 'em."

Just as he was about to stuff his last handbill into a tiny Woodchuck's

hole beside the roadway, in a dark and lonesome part of the forest, he was startled by the figure of a strange old Porcupine who came hobbling along by the aid of a crooked staff. A battered old hat was cocked over one eye and under his arm he carried a faded green bag, from the opening of which protruded the neck of a violin. He eyed Caleb very disagreeably, and indeed his whole appearance was so trampish and forbidding that Caleb decided to pass him by as hurriedly as possible. But the old Porcupine thought differently, and, swinging his staff to bar the path, he leered:

"Where are you traveling, Son?"

Caleb falteringly told him his destination, his hearer meanwhile chuckling away to himself, apparently in

great amusement. When Little Caleb had finished, Mr. Porcupine confidently told him that he knew well

the village, the very Botanist, the very garden, and, finally, the very plant itself that Caleb was seeking. And that while it was too far to walk, if he would give him one pumpkin

seed for his trouble, he would arrange to have him carried there without further delay. This seemed most reasonable to Caleb, so he gladly gave the Porcupine a seed, whereupon the rascal broke into a hoarse laugh and cried:

"All aboard, Sonny, jump on my back and I 'll carry you!"

And then with a rustle he elevated his quills so that they stood out threateningly in all directions. Caleb took one look at the bristling points, and turning aside he ran through the woods as though his very life depended upon it, while his little heart pounded away furiously in his breast.

He ran through the ferns and underbrush; around tree-trunks and through brambles which tore his little brown

HIRAM HAWK
EXPRESS

overalls in many places. I really believe that he would have been running to this day, were it not that suddenly something snapped across his face and a deafening rattle of pots and pans resounded in his ears, and to his horror he saw that in his blind haste he had hopelessly wrecked a Spider's gauzy home.

Before him lay scattered a wild assortment of household belongings, tables, chairs, and cradles, all heaped in confusion, while confronting him was an angry Spider, threateningly brandishing a blunderbuss and demanding to know what Caleb meant by destroying his property. Caleb tried to explain, but the Spider's wrath was only appeased by the payment of a pumpkin seed and the humblest

apologies, besides the promise to never do it again.

This unpleasant adventure caused

Caleb to feel very sad and dejected. He commenced to think of his home in the old hollow tree and all his good

times there, and he wondered if he would ever succeed in reaching the cotton stalk. But he never saw the tiny figure that reached from behind a moss-covered tree-trunk and touched him with a magic wand, and who again filled his heart with fresh courage.

It was Wisp-Wisp, the Fairy of Good Luck.

Later, Caleb received another fright, for lying in the road he beheld many long, black objects.

"Jimminy! I believe they 're black snakes!" he cried, jumping with fright.

"Shucks — no —" broke in a voice from over a clump of waving reeds. "They 're nothing but my new hip boots, Boss."

Caleb turned to see the dripping

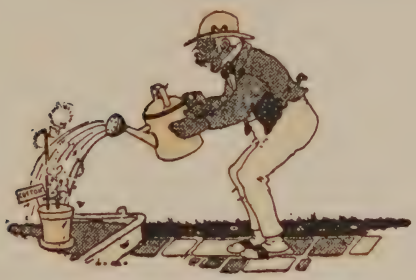
figure of a Daddy Longlegs, who was grinning from ear to ear, who explained that he had laid them aside while he took a dip in a wayside pool.

Daddy Longlegs proved to be a great traveler, and became most sympathetic when told of the villainous Porcupine, and even went so far as to accompany Caleb as a guide until they came to a lofty oak, attached to which was a swinging sign, bearing the words:

HIRAM HAWK, EXPRESS
Baggage delivered in Town or Country
Accommodation for Passengers

CHAPTER VIII

HIRAM HAWK'S EXPRESS



CHAPTER VIII

HIRAM HAWK'S EXPRESS

DADDY LONGLEGS pulled a hanging cord, and way up in the branches Caleb could hear the tinkling of a bell. Soon Mr. Hawk appeared in person and, upon learning Caleb's errand, agreed to carry him to the plant and return, for one seed.

After Caleb Cottontail had agreed to the bargain, Mr. Hawk adjusted a saddle to his back and away they went, while Mrs. Hawk, poking her head from a lofty window, called:

"Better bring back a chicken for dinner, Hi."

On, on they flew over hills and valleys, across rivers, past fields and meadows, and then over the red-roofed village itself, where Caleb could see the people, like so many ants, moving about.

At last Mr. Hawk said they were directly above the Professor's garden, and he commenced to circle about with outspread wings. As they began to descend, Caleb could see a tiny speck moving in the garden below. Mr. Hawk said this was the Botanist himself, but that it would soon be time for him to take his noonday nap in a little vine-covered summer house at the far end of the garden. Even while they were speaking, the sound of the

village bell floated up to them, and the black speck stirred and entered the little building at the end of the garden.

Caleb was greatly surprised that his guide seemed so well acquainted with the habits of the Botanist, until

he explained that the Professor was a great friend of his, having furnished his family with choice poultry for ages back. But latterly he had not visited him so often, owing to a freckled-faced stable-boy, who had an unpleasant way of throwing open a window and poking out a musket whenever he tried to make a friendly call.

"Does he ever fire?" asked Caleb.

"Oh, yes, he has popped at me dozens of times," chuckled Mr. Hawk, with a wink. "But those pesky stable-boys aren't much on the shot, anyway."

Making a great circle he suddenly flew down and left Caleb in a sheltering hollow, not far from the garden. Caleb, his heart beating fast with ex-

citement, worked his way to an ivy-covered wall which was built around the garden, and he crept along its edge until he came to an opening large enough to squeeze through. He cautiously stepped within and listened, but heard no sound except the breezes which swayed the vegetable plants.

Picking his way carefully through a lettuce bed, he stole on until he came to a mossy walk. All was quiet and still in the drowse of noonday. Caleb peeped carefully over the top of a lettuce leaf and saw the Professor, in a rustic chair in the summer house. Over his face was a gay bandanna and he was peacefully nodding, and there, just beyond, Little Caleb spied something—something white and fluffy. His heart gave a great jump

of joy. It was the waving top of a cotton plant.

"I 've found it — I 've found it," he exclaimed under his breath, and, with a beating heart, he carefully commenced to tiptoe past the sleeping figure toward the coveted plant.

At last, reaching it in safety, he

stretched up and, with a great feeling of triumph, tore away a stalk; a stalk large enough for four rabbit tails. Then, giving a hitch to his little brown pantaloons, he turned and softly made his way back down the garden path.

"I'm taking his pet plant," thought Caleb, and he retraced his steps and gently placed a pumpkin seed right on the Professor's knee in payment.

Caleb intended to steal back through the opening by which he had entered the garden, but he discovered to his horror that a gardener had appeared, who was weeding the lettuce path, and he had placed a heavy wheelbarrow across the hole. Escape that way was impossible, and, even as he stood pondering as to how he was going to join Mr. Hawk, a sleeping

coach-dog gave an awakening bark and dashed off, straight toward Caleb Cottontail.

The gardener, looking up to see what it was all about, spied the fleeing figure of Little Caleb, and, throwing down his hoe, with a shout, joined in the frantic chase. I cannot bear to tell of all the terrible things that happened then: how the stable-boy, the coachman, a portly butler, and that terrible coach-dog, all joined in chasing this poor, frightened little rabbit about the garden. He dashed hither and thither, this way and that, desperately clinging to the cotton stalk, past the Professor, who awoke with a start, under grape arbors, through flower beds, around the sun dial, past trellises, jumping flower pots and

boxes in his mad flight until, nearly exhausted, he darted through the open door of the coach-house and hid away in a dark corner of a market-basket, where he burrowed his way deep down through the newly cut clover tops with which it was filled, dragging the cotton stalk behind him.

For a long time he lay still, terrified and panting, breathlessly listening to his pursuers searching for him. When the stable-boy came in and said that Mary, the housemaid, had seen the Rabbit running away through the rose garden next door, and that they had given up the hunt, he felt safe again.

CHAPTER IX

CALEB'S ESCAPE

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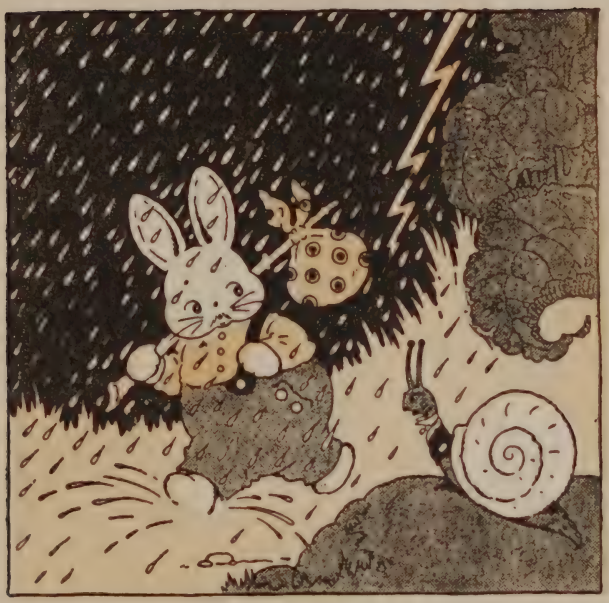
CALEB, tired and exhausted, must have fallen asleep, for suddenly he was awaked by a great "Bump" — as the basket in which he was hiding was lifted into a farm wagon. At the same time he heard the kindly voice of the Professor giving directions to a hired man to drive down to old Mrs. Wiggin's and leave the basket of sweet clover for her pet Bunnies.

"I 'm not a pet Bunny," thought Caleb, "but, anyway, I 'll go as one

if it 'll help me escape from here, and I remember Granny has often told us of those pets of old Mrs. Wiggin's. If I 'm not mistaken she lives right at the edge of our forest."

Then he heard the sound of a horse being hitched to a wagon, and with a loud cluck and a drawling " Git ap, Dobbin," the wagon gave a jolt and they were off — the hired man and Caleb — only, of course, the man was on the seat, while the little Rabbit was in the basket, which was quite different, for a seat has springs and a basket has none.

Finally, however, the roofs of the village disappeared in the distance and Caleb ventured to peep over the edge of the basket. Before him, on the seat, the driver sat nodding in the



sun, while old Dobbin plodded along mechanically.

"He'll be asleep soon, too, if he does n't watch out," thought Caleb.

Far off, he could see the hazy outline of the forest, and, as they gradually approached it, he made plans for

his escape, and, when he had poked his head out for the hundredth time, he at last saw the crossroads, one of which led into the forest. Crawling cautiously out, he waited until a convenient branch came within his reach, and, throwing out the cotton stalk, he grasped the bough tightly and his weight lowered him gently to the ground.

"I'm safe—I'm safe!" he shouted; but—NO—for suddenly his eyes fell on something white, and that something was wedged in the spokes of the wagon wheel and was going round and round and round. It was the precious cotton stalk and it was slowly going farther and farther away with each revolution of the wheel.

Caleb, forgetting all danger, dashed

after it madly, but do all he could he could n't dislodge it. He tried to reach it and he tried to poke it with his stick, but without success. All he could do was to run beside that wagon in desperation and cry:

"I 've lost it — I 've lost it!"

At last, unable to go any farther, he dropped down exhausted in the dust of the roadway, crying as though his heart would break.

Just then something more happened, for shuffling down the road came a poor, old beggar 'Possum, who limped and moaned as he ambled along. Upon seeing Caleb he stretched out his palm and said:

"Please help a poor, old 'Possum, Sir, who has n't had a meal for a week."

Caleb's hand went right down into the pocket of his little brown overalls and up came a pumpkin seed.

"Take it, my poor friend," he said. "It 's all I have."

Old Beggar Possum, taking it, bowed low and replied:

"I thank you, Little Rabbit. Your generosity is great. Allow me to make a small gift in return." And he drew from beneath his coat an object which he gave to Caleb. "I picked it off a cart wheel, back up the road."

To Caleb's great delight, there was the wonderful cotton stalk right back in his possession again.

"Hurrah!" he shouted. "Luck is with me."

The 'Possum directed Caleb to a path which led directly to the heart of the forest, and Caleb found little difficulty in returning, until, to his amazement, it commenced to grow dark.

"It must be nightfall coming," thought Caleb as he quickened his steps.

Other hurrying creatures overtook

him, all too busy to even notice a little Cottontail; all but a tiny Snail who had stopped beside the path and was just drawing his head in his shell when he spied Caleb.

"You 'd better get under cover, youngster," he said, "for it is going to rain great guns in a minute."

Caleb did not know what "great guns" were, but, if they were anything like the blunderbuss the Spider had flourished at him, he was willing enough to seek shelter, and, sure enough, in a moment there was a splash, splash, splash, and the great drops commenced to fall, pattering loudly upon the leaves. Caleb managed to avoid them for the most part, by dodging from one bush to another, but, coming to a fork in the road, it

became so dark that he was bewildered and could not remember which one led to The Green Tree.

He knew that there was a guide-post, but what good are guide-posts when one cannot see to read them? So, he decided that the only thing to do was to wait until a flash of lightning came. But luck again favored our hero, for a tiny spot of light appeared up the pathway and it grew larger and larger, until standing before Caleb was a smiling Firefly, with a huge chimney about his waist, illuminating the darkness. He was very obliging and flew about the sign-board, but he did it hurriedly, for he explained that he feared a sudden gust might either snuff out his light or smoke his chimney.

CHAPTER X

'CALEB'S HOME-COMING'

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CALEB thanked the little Lightning Bug very politely, and they continued along the path together — Caleb very glad of his bright and cheerful company.

When they arrived at the brook, the very one which flowed by The Green Tree, they found great confusion reigning. Instead of the gentle little stream of the morning there was now a rushing, swirling torrent, for the storm, which was now rumbling

away in the distance, had caused a freshet, and of the many stepping-stones there was not a trace.

All the dwellers along the shore were hurrying their household belongings back to higher ground, while, at the water's edge, Muskrats were passing up such things as they could rescue from the flood. Both banks were lined with creatures, anxious to cross from one side to the other. Caleb saw the friendly Longlegs go across on a cable which a Spider had strung from bank to bank, and, thinking that he might be able to cross upon it, too, Caleb hailed him, but to no avail, for the Spider cried indignantly:

"No, Sir, you destroyed one piece of property of mine to-day, and you

won't get a chance at another. No, Sir-ee!"

Caleb was perplexed at this, but, hearing that a Turtle had established

a ferry farther downstream, he hurried and arrived just in time for the last boat. At first he was refused

passage, for he did not have even one seed left, and there were a large number of passengers, but, after explaining his plight, he secured a crossing. He had, however, to take his place near the tiller, as he was the last comer. They tossed and tumbled about dangerously, for the current was very strong, but finally reached the bank in safety. Caleb leaped ashore and sped away as fast as his little legs would carry him; straight in the direction of his home.

He was drenched and he was tired, but his stout little heart was beating with great happiness, for he held very tightly the treasured cotton stalk. Upon turning the corner, Caleb ran headlong into the portly figure of Tipman Green, the Janitor, who, re-

covering his balance, grasped Caleb's shoulders and exclaimed:

"Goodness me! It's Caleb Cottontail safe and sound! We thought you were lost, for we found your cap lodged in a turn of the brook and we've been hunting for you since sun-up."

Just then The Green Tree came into sight, and Oh! Oh! What a time there was. From all directions came shouts of:

"Hurrah! Caleb Cottontail is found! Caleb Cottontail is found!"

All the windows in The Green Tree were flung open and heads appeared in every one. Below, in the open door, stood Grandmother Cottontail with arms outstretched, while proudly up the pathway scampered Little Caleb

holding before him his treasure, the wonderful cotton stalk.

I only wish you might have seen how Granny hugged him to her breast, and how she placed her hand upon

Caleb's head and proudly told him that he was a "true Cottontail." How old Doctor Meadow Mouse picked him up bodily and held him high in the air while the tenants gave three cheers. And I also wish that you might have been at the great reception which Grandmother Cottontail gave the following week, and seen Granny, serene and happy once more, as she strutted about with her beautiful new tail, so deftly attached. She was the marvel of all.

"It is the crowning feat of my long practice," said old Doctor Meadow Mouse, with professional pride.

Just then the music commenced and Little Caleb, bearing the Miller's Daughter on his arm, led the cotillion, and with the other arm he held a beau-

tiful bunch of juicy carrots, upon which was tied a card with the inscription:

To
Caleb Cottontail, a little rabbit with a brave heart
from
Wisp-Wisp, the Fairy of Good Luck.

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